



Bitterroot National Forest

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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"Public Monitoring Opportunity of the Middle East Fork Project"

Hamilton, Montana, March 6, 2007 — The Bitterroot National Forest is looking for individuals interested in working as part of a multiparty monitoring group to monitor the Middle East Fork Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project on the Sula Ranger District. This landscape level project is one of the first in Montana authorized under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and has been of interest to a variety of people with different perspectives on forest management.

By using a multiparty approach, the Bitterroot National Forest hopes to learn from the monitoring group's efforts to improve future projects. Multiparty monitoring is an opportunity to build trust and better understanding among the Forest Service, other agencies, and members of the community of how to improve the health of national forest system lands through management decisions and actions.

The Forest is working with the National Forest Foundation, WildWest Institute, Friends of the Bitterroot, Montana Logging Association, and local Forester, Craig Thomas to identify a small, diverse monitoring group of 12-15 individuals who represent a balance of various perspectives on forest management. As a member of the monitoring group, one could expect to be in the field reviewing project activities with the group and meeting periodically to discuss monitoring results. It is likely the group will be active for 2 years, spending an estimated 4-8 hours per month on the project. Ideally the group would include a balanced mix of perspectives, representing the varied interests from all interested stakeholders in this project. The membership could include local community members; industry and forestry interests; local, county, state and federal government representatives; environmental and conservation organizations; recreation interests; academic institutions and researchers.

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